

## *Press Release*

### **MGNREGA helps in Reducing Water Shortage in Thingling Village in West Sikkim**

Thingling-I also known as first Thingling village under Thingling Khecheopalri Gram Panchayat often faced severe water shortage during winter months. The entire village depended on the water pipe line sourced from several kilometers uphill. The houses on the top of the hill had easier access to water from this pipeline, while the households in the downhill did not receive sufficient supply. Often the women living downhill had to carry water from the houses located on the hilltop. Conflict over water during lean season was often noticed in the village. This water scarcity also badly affected the agriculture, restricting winter crops, vegetable farming and even livestock rearing.

In the year 2012, the villagers voiced their concern for an intervention to enhance the water availability in the village. After consensus, a proposal for building 60 water storage tanks of 5000 liter capacity each under MGNREGA was put up and approved by the Gram Sabha. It was difficult for the Gram Panchayat to provide water tanks at individual household level for all 166 houses. Therefore a cluster of 2-3 houses was provided one water storage tank which helped in covering more than 80% of the households. MGNREGA supported the labour, material component like cement, steel and sand while the village contributed local materials like stone and timber. A total of 60 water storage tanks were built under Thingling-I village costing about Rs 50,000/- each. The execution mode was a community-driven approach without using contractors. A total investment of Rs. 31.48 lakh was made during 2013-14, creating an additional water storage capacity of 0.30 million litres in the village.

The night flow from the springs and streams which was earlier not utilized fully was now stored in these tanks during night time. This additional water availability boosted the village's economy. The villagers who earlier practiced farming of subsistence crops like maize, millet and vegetables have now changed their cropping pattern over the last two years. As many as 120 households have converted their dry maize field into large cardamom field. The villagers have taken up large cardamom plantation in their dry fields. Each household on an average has planted an acre of large cardamom. Large cardamom is a shade loving plant and requires regular irrigation to survive. The villagers have planted more than 120 acres of large cardamom over the last two years. The first harvest is anticipated from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year onwards. An acre of



large cardamom is expected to yield about 80 kilogram of dried cardamom which would fetch an average income of Rs. 88,000 per household at the current market price of Rs. 1100/kg. Moreover this has also enabled the families to rear more livestock like cows and pigs. Close to 80 households now rear cows while about 70 households rear goats and pigs. Majority of the families today have a small kitchen garden as well to source leafy vegetables for their self consumption.

The impact of enhanced water availability was felt on village sanitation as well. Earlier most families could not have adequate sanitation standard due to shortage of water and many villagers depended on the stream and river for laundry and bathing. Women and children suffered the most due to shortage of water. The Senior Secondary school which has a total strength of about 350 children also faced the problem of



water shortage. The school toilet had become non-functional and had been shut down due to lack of water supply. After the water tanks were built in the village, the sanitation status has improved in the village while the children of the Secondary School also get access to improved sanitation facilities in the nearby village.

This has brought about greater awareness among the local community leading to wiser use of water, no household now leaves the water tap open or unattended. The water is stored throughout the night and not wasted. Many households have voluntarily collected money to create an additional pipeline from a perennial water source, 2 km away from the village. Similarly other Gram Panchayat Wards have also taken up the construction of water storage tanks under MGNREGA. Under Thingling Khecheopalri GP, a total of 158 water tanks



with an investment of about Rs 79 lakhs have been sanctioned, of which 136 water tanks have been completed and 22 water tanks are due for completion shortly. This intervention to strengthen the water storage infrastructure under MGNREGA has helped in not only ensuring water security and better sanitation but also strengthened the livelihoods of the people.